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My Soul Thou hast Much Goods

Edson

MY SOUL,

Thou Hast Much Goods.

BY

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Soul, what would life have brought to thee and me
Had we been coupled in some darker land?

To me a listening, as of one who dreamed
He heard a voice, yet vainly calls again—
Who hears the clanking of a ghostly chain,
But cannot see the Thing that's linked to him;
To thee a waiting, as a beggar blind
Waits for a guiding hand that's long delayed,
Till, hunger-pressed, he tries to grope his way,
Pushed hither, thither, by unkindly throngs,
And falls at last beneath their trampling feet.

But I have heard thy call and know thy voice,
And we have held sweet converse through the veil
Of flesh that hides my eyes from thee, my Soul!
And thou hast grasped a Hand that leadeth thee,
And maketh sure thy steps, and feedeth thee.

A HINDU WIDOW'S PRAYER.

THE following prayer was written in Hindustani by a heathen widow who has been taught in her zenana by one of the lady-missionaries of the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society. Sitting over against our treasury, she breathes this prayer to the Father whom she does not know:

"O Lord, hear my prayer! No one has turned an eye on the oppression that we poor women suffer, though with weeping and crying and desire we have turned to all sides, hoping that some would save us. No one has lifted up his eyelids to look upon us or inquire into our case. We have searched above and below, but thou art the only One who wilt hear our complaint. Thou knowest our impotence, our degradation, our dishonor.

"O Lord, inquire into our case. For ages dark ignorance has brooded over our minds

and spirits. Like a cloud of dust it rises and wraps us round, and we are like prisoners in an old and mouldering house, choked and buried in the dust of custom, and we have no strength to go out. Bruised and beaten, we are like the dry husks of the sugarcane when the sweet juice has been extracted. All-knowing God, hear our prayer, forgive our sins and give us power to escape, that we may see something of thy world. O Father, when shall we be set free from this jail? For what sin have we been born to live in this prison? From thy throne of judgment justice flows, but it does not reach us. In this our lifelong misery only injustice comes near us. O thou Hearer of prayer, if we have sinned against thee, forgive; but we are too ignorant to know what sin is. Must the punishment of sin fall on those who are too ignorant to know what it is? O great Lord, our name is written with drunkards, with lunatics, with imbeciles, with the very animals. As they are not responsible, we are not. Criminals confined in the jails for life are happier than we, for they know something

of thy world. They were not born in prison, but we have not for one day—no, not even in our dreams—seen thy world: to us it is nothing but a name. And, not having seen the world, we cannot know thee its Maker. Those who have seen thy works may learn to understand thee, but for us who are shut in it is not possible to learn to know thee. We see only the four walls of the house. Shall we call them the world, or India? We have been born in this jail, and we have died here, and are dying.

"O Father of the world, hast thou not created us? Or has, perchance, some other god made us? Dost thou care only for men? Hast thou no thought for us women? Why hast thou created our race, male and female? O Almighty, hast thou not power to make us other than we are, that we too might have some share in the comforts of this life? The cry of the oppressed is heard even in the world. Then canst thou look upon our victim-hosts and shut thy doors of justice? O God, almighty and unapproachable, think upon thy mercy, which is like a vast sea, and remember

us! O Lord, save us, for we cannot bear our hard lot! Many of us have killed ourselves, and we are still killing ourselves. O God of mercy, our prayer to thee is this—that the curse may be removed from the women of India. Create in the hearts of the men some sympathy, that our lives may no longer be passed in vain longing—that, saved by thy mercy, we may taste something of the joys of life."

MY SOUL, THOU HAST MUCH GOODS.

I.

My Soul, thou hast much goods laid up.
The years,
Even though they be like the lean kine
that ate
The fat ones and were lean and hungry
still,
Cannot devour thy store.
Come, sit thee down
Before thy treasure-house, and let me
bring
Out from its depths thy precious hoard,
and thou

Mayst feast thine eyes a while upon thy
wealth,
And tell me, after, where it shall be
stored.

But sit not thou with puffed-out eyes,
and heart
Bursting with vanity; spread not thy
hands
As if to say, "See what these earned
for me!"
And stretch not out thine arms, nor
smooth thy lap,
To clasp and hold thy treasures: I must
tell
Thee how they came to thy possession
first.

II.

Remember that thou art a woman's
soul—
Not as the eldest son, dashing away

His tears, steps boldly up unto the throne
And crowns himself, none challenging his right,
As the King's son, to sit in royal state;
Not as a man's soul comest thou to-day
To bid thy comrade to display for thee
The things thou hast laid up in thy storehouse.
Remember that thou art a woman's soul,
And learn that all that makes thee strong and rich
Thou hast inherited from One who died.

There is but one King in the universe
To whom a woman's soul seems lawful heir.[1]

[1] The religion of Jesus Christ is the only one in which women are recognized as active agents and equal participants.

The Enemy would call thee bastard
child,
Would leave thee nameless, poor, for-
gotten—yea,
Unnumbered, save to swell thy broth-
er's train.
This King has owned thee for his daugh-
ter, called
Thee by his name, and made for thee a
crown
And sceptre, and a seat upon the
throne.
He "guided wittingly"[1] the patriarch's
hands
To bless the younger with the first-born
child,
And his own right hand seeks the lower
head.

[1] Gen. xlviii. 14: "And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly, for Manasseh was the first-born."

III.

It is a gift to thee, not thine own wage
At eventide for day of sweaty toil:
No single precious treasure is there here
But came by will of Him who died for thee;
And thou wast made his heir partly to keep
In trust for others,[1] whom he loved as well,
The heritage they could not yet receive,
The narrow circle of whose outward life
Was built up into barriers too high
For spirits with clipped wings to over-fly.

Perhaps to-night he will require of thee
Swift reckoning of thy trust from him for them:

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 10: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, *as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*"

Shall he find all the treasure locked
away,
And hear the groaning of these burst-
ing doors,
And see the triumph of the Enemy,
Who counts what thou dost hide his
lawful spoils?
Hast thou thought thou wast the only
daughter,
That all thy Father's jewels were for
thee,
That all the crowns of gold, and robes
of white,
Scarlet and purple, and fine linen
twined,
Were given to enhance thy comeli-
ness?
Hast thou been mocked so by the En-
emy?

IV.

Sit in a lower seat where thou canst look
Into the eyes of some who see not thee,

And see not what of theirs thou hast in
store,
Whose eyes are dim with tears and look-
ing long
For that which thou art keeping to thy-
self.
Sit low, my Soul, where thou canst hear
their sighs
And count the throbbing of their heavy
hearts.

Sit near! It may be, in a little while,
When thou hast seen the half of what
thou hast,
Thou wilt incline to share with them,
to fling
Into their empty laps some trinket
small
That pales like morning star beside the
blaze
Of greater gems, and so may well be
spared.

Or thou mayst long to staunch their
bleeding tears,
To draw their heads down on thy happy
breast
And teach their hearts to sing, in time
with thine,
The joyous Song of songs—which thou
canst scarce
Remember having learned — thou'st
sung so long.

Sit close that thou mayst warm the stiff-
ened limbs
That never tried to walk: maybe the time
Of healing draweth near and thou canst
dip
The helpless in the pool.[1] How many
years
Have they lain here waiting thy help-
ing hand?

[1] John v. 7: "The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool."

And oh, forget not to step in thyself,
For well I know thee for a halting soul,
Unequal in thy pace and fainting oft.
Ah! couldst thou learn of them to leap and praise,
And never weary, or limp back to sin,
Or turn thy face toward him who hateth thee!

V.

Take off thy shoes: this is an holy place;
For first among thy treasures is a cross
Heavy with blood and tears.
Was it the King
Whose tears and blood are sodden in this wood?
Was this the measure of thy Father's love,
That from his veins he traced his will for thee,

And welcomed death because it made
thee rich?
Come, dry thy tears: his eyes thy bottle filled;
And look upon this cross! Where wilt
thou keep
The best thou hast?
Shall it be laid again
In its dark corner, where thou mayst
come in
And worship it apart from common
herds,
With silken cushion 'neath thy silken
knee?
Hast thou done this to please the Enemy?

Or shall I lift it up for dying eyes
To light their fires of life by, and for
lips
Quivering with grief to kiss and smile
again?

And shall I set it high to show the world
The way out of Despond's deep mire and filth
To the clean road thy feet have learned to tread?

Nay, then, take it in thine own hand, and let
Its shadow cover like a brooding wing
The storm-beat nestlings shivering by thy side.

Was ever cross like this of thine?
It is
For them like mother-bird[1] with soft, warm breast;
For floundering wanderers a beacon-light;
For yearning exiles signal for return;

[1] Ps. xci. 4: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

For men whose brows are marked a refuge sure;
Pillar of fire and cloud to lead the host
That marches, never halting, night and day,
With eyelids sealed and hands crossed on still breasts,
Through earthen portals to the Great White Throne.

VI.

What shall I show thee next?
Wilt see thy crown,
Fashioned of purest gold, as would befit
Thy Father's daughter? but there are no stars
Upon the circlet. Shall thy crown go bare
While other diadems are lighting heaven?
Lead by the hand these heavy-laden souls

Up to the hill where burdens roll away,
And, parting, they will leave within thy hand
Guerdon of gems to shine upon thy brow.[1]

VII.

And how much owest thou unto thy Lord
For giving thee a Christian parentage?
Here are a father's and a mother's prayers,
Angels upon the ladder's stairs to bear
Upward thy needs and back a quick supply.
Before I knew thee was thy fibre spun
By faithful souls that hoped and loved and prayed,

[1] Dan. xii. 3: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

And stretched thy warp of life both strong and clean.
What threads and colors hast thou woven in,
And whose design is in this pattern wrought?
Here it is close and firm, the texture fine:
Thy hand was careful all along this length,
As if the Master stood and watched thee weave;
But here 'tis loose and thin, my easy Soul!
And here and there some ugly rag is drawn
Which thou hast borrowed from the Enemy.
Carest thou not enough for thine own life
To make it worthy of thy Father's child?

And here the shuttle hangs, still full of thread:
Didst think the fabric rich and long enough
To clip out of the loom ere it was noon?
Thou wouldst not be content with measure scant,
That clothes thyself, but has no length to spare
To warm these who have never learned to weave,
Whose life begins and ends in tangled skeins,
Soiled by the enemy and thrown away.
Thou couldst not walk serene in flowing robes
To give a reckoning of thy stewardship
With these thy sisters naked by thy side:

What if the King should strip thee, to thy shame,
Before the eyes that scarce dare scan thee now?
Back to thy work, with all thy strength and skill!
Only when they are clad and day is done
Thou'lt draw the shuttle from thy finished life.

VIII.

Is it thy talent in this napkin wrapped,
My slothful Soul?
Nay, frame me no excuse,
Nor try to look as thou wast innocent.
'Tis well that I have brought this treasure out
In time to send it forth to seek a mate:
If other hand than mine had oped these doors
And found thy talent single still, how could

I bear to see thee cast away, my Soul,
And ever hear thee weep and gnash thy teeth,[1]
And hear the laughter of the Enemy?
Thou temptest me to wish I knew thee not:
Without thee I might live like flitting bird,
Forgetting yester-storms, unheeding clouds,
And end my life in death as bubbles burst.
But I am linked to thee, O faithless Soul!
Carest thou not if thou and I be lost,
That thou wouldst leave so easy task undone?
Lend it to these who sit by thee, and they
Shall quickly shower back into thy lap

[1] Matt. xxv. 30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

So rich return that thou wilt hail the day
Of reckoning with joy.

IX.

Here is thy home,
Where Love hath rule supreme. With jealous eyes
She watches all that comes nigh thee; she guards
Thy happiness, and gives thee room to grow
And prove what is the stature of a soul.
Remember that thou art a woman's soul,
And thank the King with every rising sun
For giving thee a home that is a shrine
Crowded with household gods, where highest sits
The one that bears thy countenance.
How rich
A blessing waits on woman in a land

Where mother, wife and home and honored love
Are kindred words—a chain of costly links:
Move either one, and thou hast stirred them all.

What would these sister-women's starving hearts
Count dear to pay for one short day of love
And honor?—they thy Father's daughters too,
Beaten and empty sent away whene'er
They lift a hand to ask an alms of love!

Thou canst not share thy fireside joys with those
Whose home is but a shelter dearly bought,
And thou thyself wouldst not be satisfied
With earthly love alone; albeit sweet,

It leaves a lingering taste of clay behind.
And earthly love can neither make a shield
To turn the arrows of thine Enemy,
Nor heal thy wounds, nor nerve thy failing arm,
But when, in times of conflict, thou art pressed,
Must stand outside and wring its helpless hands.
My woman-soul,
Remember Him who stands
Within the veil of thine own templed life,
Strong to defend and quick to feel thy need.
How often thou hast seen the Enemy
Driven away at thy first cry for help!
Since thou art never left to fight alone,
Thou needst not be afraid, for he is near.

Remember these poor sister-women's
souls,
Wounded and left for dead upon the
ground:
They know no god beside the Enemy
Who smites the mouths that bend to
kiss his sword.
Go lift them up, for thou hast words of
cheer
To pour into their wounds for oil and
wine.

Ah! tell them there is One whose love
for them
Is like a welling spring which over-
brims
And runs to meet the parching traveler;
Or like a father who with shaded eyes
Stands peering down the old familiar
lane
To hail the wand'rer's shadow as it creeps
Before him at the turning, while his lips

Are budding welcomes, at a breath to bloom;
Or like a mother with full aching breast
Who hastens home to bless, and sees her babe
Turn from her listless, cloyed with meaner food.
A woman may forget her sucking child,[1]
Forget the pain of pent-up fount of love,
But He cannot forget his little ones.
And so, if "father" seem too harsh a name
To ears that hear withal a hissing lash,
By answering chords in their own woman-hearts
Thou'lt win them to the motherhood[2] of God.

[1] Isa. xlix. 15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

[2] Isa. lxvi. 13: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so I will comfort you."

Oh, father-mother love so rich, so free!—
A well whence no man's hand need help thee draw,
A love that waits with golden chain and ring
To seal forgiveness ere the sinner craves;
Love that is anguish if it may not flow
In pulsing current from the heart of God
To nourish feeble souls and comfort them;
A love that flashes keen as sword from sheath
To save His darlings from the Enemy!

X.

Now art thou strong enough to have thy griefs
Borne out and laid before thine eyes? Since thou
Hast stored them with thy blessings, it would seem

That thou hast learned to read their
worth aright.
How long a time thou didst bewail and
cry,
And tear thy wounds agape with willful
hand
To make thee cry again whene'er thy lips
Forgot to tremble and essay to smile,
Till some who loved thee, weary of thy
noise,
Marveled within them how the Hand
that gave,
And, after, culled thy flowers to bloom
for aye,
Could bear with thine unreason, and
not send
Them back to wilt upon thy selfish breast!

How greatly art thou changed since
thou hast let
The Healer come and heal thee! Thou
hast gained

A finer beauty, never bloomed of joy,
And even the beggar at the gate can feel
Thy voice has caught its sweeter key from heaven.

I know a tree, late-grafted at the top,
Whose lower boughs droop low with native fruit
That almost marks it for the woodman's axe;
For they who walk beneath would never know
That it is crowned with fruitage ripened sweet,
Pecked at by birds and swung by idle winds,
Only that storms and frosts make some to fall.
It will be little missed when it is felled
To clear a path to trees whose veins run sweet.

Thus did the good thou hadst hang
out of reach
Of thirsty wayfarers and children's
hands,
Held high for harvesters that bruised
and rent
And flung its tender beauty on the
ground.

XI.

Where shall thy griefs be laid?
Not out of sight
On burial-towers,[1] stripped bare for
vultures' beaks:

[1] The Parsees in India lay the naked bodies of their dead on high towers, where they are completely stripped of flesh in an incredibly short time by birds of prey. A traveler says: "One of the painful recollections of my visit to Bombay is that of the sound of the heavily-flapping wings of crowds of vultures returning every day to seek *that food!* There can be no forgetting possible to the living in Bombay."

The writer has chosen this illustration, having

Birds of Oblivion, once they're fed, re-
turn
On loudly-flapping wings to seek fresh
prey.
If thou art loth to rise and serve thy
guests,
They'll tear thy empty hands to make
their feast.

Open the flood-gates and let Lethe roll
In smooth black tide to bury deep thy
past,
And, lo! thy first glance backward shall
reveal
Dead faces floating on its treach'rous
breast.
Grief hath a shallow grave, and Memory
Steals out by night, leaving the Will
asleep,

learned by both experience and observation that the sorrowful thoughts and memories which one is most determined to put away are most importunate and poignant.

And digs her up, and brings her home again,
Wraps her cold form in robes Joy left behind,
Turns back the hands upon the dial-plate
To point again to happy hours gone by,
Calls up a throng of loved ones vanished long,
And plays at merrymaking till the dawn.

The Will, awakening, routs poor Memory's guests,
And buries Grief alive with ruthless hand,
Then rules the busy household through the day.
But Memory lies down and feigns to sleep,
And restless bides his time till night returns

To set him free to seek his darling's
side;
And Grief lies dumb and open-eyed all
day,
Peeping 'tween clods to see the sun go
down,
Assured of being disentombed at night.
Sometimes the twain rebel and bind the
Will,
And make him sit and watch the revel
through.

Grief cannot be destroyed or hid
away,
And cannot be forgot, since Mem-
ory
Doth rove with lidless eyes that never
sleep.
Can Time with tireless cunning knot
the grass
Above her grave and keep her there
for aye?

Jacob was borne upon a tide of years
So far that he could almost touch the heights
Where Rachel waited for her lover true.
Old Age had kindly dimmed his eyes to earth,
Swarming with faces and new tiresome scenes,
And then with softest fingers stopped his ears
And muffled sounds that pressed to enter in.
So oft his mute thoughts slipped the darkened cage
To wander back to their old nesting-place,
Folding their wings in every best-loved spot:
Here, Rachel talked with him beside the well,

And there, he walked with her in Laban's fields,
Telling the story of his flight from home,
And planning how he might return to take
Possession of his heritage; and she
Should go back with him to his fatherland,
Where he would be a king, with her for queen.
"*And Rachel died by me while in the way!*"[1]

[1] There are few more touching incidents in the Bible than the death of Jacob. Full of years and honors, his ambitions satisfied, the old man's thoughts turn back to Rachel; he is mourning for her still. Rachel loved him, and her heart still beats in the faithful breasts of Benjamin and Joseph. Every other loss has been made up to him; Joseph is restored to him; he lives in plenty; but the tears that "God shall wipe away" from Jacob's face well up when he remembers, on his dying-

Only a little way lay yet beyond,
A few more steps, to wealth and honored place;
"*And Rachel died by me while in the way!*"
So Jacob mourned for Rachel all his days.

XII.

Where shall thy griefs be kept? I would not have
Them borne through life before thee on a bier,
Darkening the highways with thy pomp of woe
And curbing all thy steps to funeral pace,
Since He who raised the widow's son at Nain

day, how he started for Canaan with Rachel, and how she died "when there was yet but a little way to come unto Ephrath."

Walks on the earth no more to meet
the train;
Nor worn next to thee, like a friar's
shirt
Of barbèd cloth, to rasp and flay thy
skin
And fret away thy needed strength for
work.

Did ever mother of a new-crowned
king
Follow his throneward steps in sable
veil,
Beating her breast that gave him nour-
ishment
Because he lies not there a baby still?
Did ever parent-bird whose full-fledged
brood
On oft-taught wings have soared to
heaven's blue
Refuse to sing, and 'wail the empty
nest,

And wish them crowded back in fragile
shells?
And shall the mother of an angel
hide
Her face to wring out sorrow from her
heart,
And long to pluck from him his new-
found wings,
And make him tread life's thorny road
with her—
To drag him back from heights once
safely gained
And make him climb, perchance with
slipping feet,
The painful steep, led by her own weak
hand?
This is the measureful of love: enough
To love those whom we clasp, to loose
our hold
And watch their upward flight as one
would stand

Smiling and throwing kisses on the shore,
Then turn to toil a while ere following.[1]

XIII.

Ah! even in thy griefs thou'rt blest, my Soul!
Thy feet go lightly, half upborne by wings,
And oftentimes thy thoughts fly up like birds
To sing in company with thy beloved;
And, like the faithful dove loosed from the ark,
They always bring a token back to thee
That they have found a place of rest and peace.

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 13: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

How cometh grief to those who have
no hope?
As heavy blows fall on a poor blind
beast
That gasps and shudders, helpless in its
thrall—
That knows not whence they come, nor
why, and fears
To try to flee away lest worse befall.

Nay, what is grief to those who have
no hope?
What is the grinding of the upper
stone
Upon the nether, with a heart between?

And what is life to those who have no
hope?
A little space upon a rock-bound shore,
A little time to watch a crawling tide
Ere it shall spring to claim them as its
prey.

XIV.

My Soul, thou hast indeed much goods laid up!
Come, tell me where this blessing shall be stored:
Must grief alone, of all I have displayed,
Lie idle in the empty treasury
To swell the riches of the enemy?
And has the King bestowed one gift for thee
To keep or hide away, if so thou wilt,
Unblessed to those thou'rt learning fast to love?

Christ thought it worth his while to prove its use:
He joined the ranks and marched with even step
Shoulder to shoulder with the men he made

The long way from the cradle to the grave.
He shrank not when he came to Marah's brink,[1]
Nor shut his lips against the bitter draught
That always lent some sharper pang to thirst;
His tears fell in and made it sweet thenceforth:
Earth's tears were turned to wine when Jesus wept.

"*A man of sorrows and acquaint with grief,*"
He knows its many shapes and uses well;
He could not gird mankind about himself:
The bond would be too short, this length untwined.

[1] John xi. 35: "Jesus wept."

Since grief was plunged into his human heart
It is no more a hiltless two-edged blade,
But in his master-hand becomes a tool
To hew a stone and show an angel's face.

And he can make it still, like summer showers
Whose softly-tapping fingers waken wide
The beauty slumbering 'mid ranks of thorns.

And he can mould it to the surest key
To open hearts and let his love come in.

And he can use thy griefs, by Hope attuned,
To teach thy sisters' hearts to sing like thine,
If thou wilt only lay thy heart to theirs.

The bridge that spans the gulf 'twixt rich and poor
Must have foundations laid on either side:
None are so strong and deep as little graves.
When eyes look into eyes through falling tears,
Easy a bow of promise springs across,
And thou mayst pass to them and they to thee.
Then clasp them in thine arms as kindred meet
In alien lands to tell the news from home.

From home! And hast thou news for them from home?
Mothers of angels,[1] dreaming not of heaven,

[1] It is an accepted fact that one-third of the human race die in infancy. The statistics having been gathered in Christian lands, where natural

Not knowing even that life on earth is
but
The narrow threshold of an endless
life,
Watching the thickening clouds in shal-
low skies,

affection is strong and self-asserting and Science uses her best efforts to save and guard the lives of little children, the conclusion is unavoidable that in heathen lands the proportion is far greater.. Not only are the conditions unfavorable—the tender age at which the women marry, and the cruel neglect of them at times when they most need care; the singularly crazy, ill-contrived rules for the care of infants, and the callousness of their parents' hearts toward them—but, as if this were not enough, they have been systematically destroyed in many heathen lands from time immemorial. In our day many are born; few are reared. It would be hard to find a Chinese, Hindu, Persian or African woman twenty-five years of age who is not a "mother of angels." The writer felt a tugging at her heart that almost tore it when the Lord showed her this bond between herself and her heathen sisters.

But thinking not to search their depths to see
The crowds of little faces bending down!

Mothers of angels,
When they laid away
The swiftly-purpling flesh to turn to dust,
They flung in Hope and Love and covered them,
And thought that Love and Hope had died as well.
Thou knowst the hallowed words that open graves,
That call forth Hope and Love, though buried long,
And send them back to bless a home again.

Sweet Hope, that's born of Faith!
She makes the earth

Lie lightly on the forms thou lay'st
away,
And whispers that thy dead shall live
again
To cheer thy steps back to thine empty
home.
How couldst thou come away from
new-made graves
And turn again to daily rounds of
toil
With wonted strength if Hope lay dead
behind?

Sweet Love!
She stays to bind the riven heart
That's torn in twain and one half hid
away,
While half a heart is left to try to beat.
Love's cord, 'twixt hearts that go and
hearts that stay,
Holds fast; and hearts that go can nev-
er stray

More than the tether's length from
hearts that stay.
And Love can teach the lower heart
to spring
To join its upper half in closer bond
Whene'er 'tis loosened from the body's
weight.
Ah! thou wouldst turn away from new-
made graves
To bleed and faint if Love lay dead be-
hind.
Oh, pray to be the clay[1] in hands divine
To open their blind eyes and let them
see
The gates of pearl, the streets of shin-
ing gold,
The many mansions long prepared for
them,
The smiling, loving One upon the
throne,

[1] John ix. 6: "And he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay."

And, leaning on his breast, clasped in his arms,
The little ones they lost all safe at home.

What is it to the snow-bound traveler,
Laid down to die in his own circling track,
Darkness enshrouding him while yet alive,
Death crouching near like fierce and cunning beast,
Lulling his prey to sleep ere breaking fast,
To lift his drowsy eyes to bid farewell
To earth *and see a new-lit window near,*
With rosy faces pressed against the pane,
In cheerful talk to watch for his return?

What is it to the sleeper racked with dreams
To wake and hear his loved one's breathing soft?

XV.

And thou hast news from home—their home and thine!
Tell them all's well at home.
The lions Sin
And Pain and Want, securely chained outside,
Can never enter in to vex or harm;[1]
And life flows on in smooth and endless course,
Unstirred by troubling thought of want or woe.
Once safe within the gates, the souls they love

[1] Rev. xxi. 4, 27: "Neither shall there be any more pain. And there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth."

Will no more listen to the lying
tongue
Or fear the hatred of the Enemy.

XVI.

Tell them about the marriage-feast:
'Tis spread
With careful bounty for each bidden
guest;
"The Spirit and the bride say, Come,"[1]
and they
Who hear must summon them who
hear it not.
But who will bid them come if thou
art slack?
How wilt thou sit thee down to eat and
drink
And make excuse for some thou didst
not ask?

[1] Rev. xxii. 17: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come."

Is there in heaven a flowing tide of bliss
That at the full will hide their empty seats?
Thou knowst how Joseph sought a place to weep—
Loathing the sight of his own sleek, plump skin,
And Egypt reeling 'neath her load of corn—
Because his poor old father drooped at home
And fleetest messengers might be too late;
And Dives asked no respite for himself,
But only longed to warn those left behind.
Is this one fire of hell—to lift our eyes
And see the souls we love fast following?

XVII.

Tell them they're missed at home.[1]
Death's crucible
Consumes not love. Hearts that have
learned to beat
By listening to a mother's beating heart,
Long folded close, could never quite
forget
To beat most restfully when near her
heart.
What though there be no night, no
sleepy-time,
No need of lullaby or evening prayer,
No pang of hunger and no burn of
thirst,
No hurt to bind, no tear to kiss away?[2]
Heaven never echoed to a baby's cry,

[1] Luke xv. 10: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

[2] Rev. xxi. 4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying."

But some must wonder why the time is long,
And miss their mothers in the shining throng.

How does the baby laugh and crow and seem
To be beguiled from loneliness! and yet
It drops its toys and reaches out its arms
At the first sound of mother's homeward steps,
And cuddles in her arm-nest, cooing low.
'Twas happy then, but now is satisfied!

XVIII.

Yea, they are missed at home:
Christ's bleeding hands,
Telling the jewels that he earned with them,
Find many lacking. In his kingly crown

How many empty settings there must be!
He loves them. When the spear's point cleft his side,
It pierced their names inscribed upon his heart.
What though the "ninety-nine" be folded safe?[1]
He cannot rest content if one be lost.
"For Jesus' sake," we pray, and always wield
A lever, thus, to move Omnipotence,
Because bestowing riches makes him rich,
"For Jesus' sake;" because he died to save,
And yearns to keep, "for Jesus' sake, amen!"

[1] Matt. xviii. 12: "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

XIX.

Tell them there's rest at home—
Not as the slave
Drops in the furrow, pillowed on his yoke,
After a day of toil, while taskmasters
Are wooed and won by sleep on beds of down:
Not so thy Father giveth rest in heaven.[1]

Thy King came down and tilled the earth he made;
Yoked with the slave, he shared his scanty crumbs.
Homeless and hungry in his own domain,

[1] Rev. xiv. 13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

He stooped to toil to win sweet rest for slaves,
That at the furrow's end their weary souls
Might find the Everlasting Arms outstretched
To bear them straight away to Paradise;
And so thy Father giveth rest in heaven.
See how a mother lifts her sleeping child
With fondling arms, and lays it close by her.
She sleeps, but sets her waking heart to watch,
And sound alarm at Danger's first approach;
And when the morning opens flowers and eyes,
Though Sleep hath taken wing, sweet Rest remains.

XX.

Tell them the way.
Lo! thou hast strained thine eyes
To follow thy loved ones within the gates.
The path they trod has shining foot-prints still,
And the same Guide who led them safely through
Stands by, with waiting hand and pleading face,
For thee to lay thy sisters' hands in his,
That he may joyfully convey th home.

XXI.

Now look no more.
Thou couldst not bear to sit
In the rock's cleft and see the world pass by

Without the hand of God to cover thee.
He only looks and lives.
See! I have shown
Thee but some difference between thyself,
Since thou'st crept up to kiss his garment's hem,
And risen to the height of a saved soul,
And women's souls still bowed—bent, crippled souls
That hardly lift their eyes above the ground;
And I can feel thee trembling with desire
To break the chain that binds thee fast to me,
Fretting because my feet are rooted here,
For thou wouldst fly to carry help to all.
At last thou'st learned to love thy sisters' souls!

Now, wilt thou ever sit at ease again
Or call thy treasures back to bide with thee?
O Soul! rejoice that it is not too late
To bless thy sisters with their Father's wealth.
Thou wilt not say, "What is my little store?"
A world is filled if his hand breaks a loaf.
Share all thou hast with them; and when thy hands
Have learned to give as fast as they receive,
Thou'lt have much goods laid up in heaven,
My Soul!

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